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ABSTRACT

Teachers, counselors, and school administrators working in schools today are aware of the many problems students face. To help these educators address these problems, a model for bringing hope training into the classroom is presented. The concept of hope has been of increasing interest to educators, researchers, and clinicians. It has been defined as the sum of mental willpower and "waypower" (a mental capacity people call on to find one or more effective ways to reach a goal) that individuals direct toward their dreams. A variety of workable methods for increasing hope in students are described. The strategies are grounded in previous research and application, and can be used by teachers and counselors for grades K-12 within a variety of curricular contexts. Some of the methods rely on stories, whereas others involve teaching young people to give themselves more hopeful messages and to make useful decisions. The attitude held by the teacher or counselor that hope is an integral and necessary part of the process of communicating hope to students is explored. The concept and characteristics of a high-hope school are also investigated. (RJM)

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FOSTERING HOPE IN THE SCHOOLS: STRATEGIES FOR COUNSELORS AND TEACHERS

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Running head: Fostering Hope in the Classroom

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Abstract

Teachers and counselors are well aware of the problems facing youth today. Grounded in previous research and application, this paper presents a model for bringing hope training into the classroom. Strategies presented can be used by teachers and counselors for grades K-12 within a variety of curricular contexts. Suggestions are also made for examining and increasing counselors' and teacher hope, and an arguement is made for developing high-hope schools

FOSTERING HOPE IN THE SCHOOLS; STRATEGIES FOR COUNSELORS AND TEACHERS

Diane McDermott, Sarah Hastings, Kelli Garíglietti,
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Every teacher, counselor and school administrator working in schools today is aware of the many problems facing our nation's youth. As concerned educators we have tried a variety of ways to teach, to structure the day, and to involve parents and the community in an attempt to address these problems. We have tried numerous drug programs, yet the drug use rate among minors is at an all time high. We have installed metal detectors at the entrances to our buildings, but still guns are brought into the schools and children are killed. We watch the angst of youth, listen to their music that so often reflects despair, and wonder how we can give them hope for a brighter future. Bringing hope into the classroom and making hope lessons part of the curriculum is the subject of this paper.

The concept of hope, defined by C.R. Snyder (1994), has been of increasing interest to educators, researchers and clinicians during the past five years. This interest in defining and understanding the presence and impact of hope appears to be one example of the movement toward identifying aspects of individual character that promote healthy functioning and well-being, rather than pathology and dysfunction. A social psychological construct, hope is identified as a cognitive function that is intimately tied to goal setting and behavior.

Snyder defines hope as the sum of mental willpower and waypower that individuals have directed toward their goals (Snyder, 1994). In order to understand the meaning of this statement, one must understand the meaning of goals, willpower, and waypower. Snyder defines goals to be any object, experience, or outcome that we imagine and desire in our minds. While goals may be concrete or vague, singular or multiple, simple or complex, their attainment falls somewhere

between impossible and a guaranteed thing.

Two components of hope, willpower and waypower, must be present in order to work toward the attainment of goals. Willpower, a cognitive construct, is defined by Snyder (1994) as a reservoir of determination and commitment we call upon to move us in the direction of our goals. Thoughts and messages associated with high willpower are "I can do it," "I can succeed," and "I'll give it all I've got." Willpower is ignited more readily when we can clearly define and represent a goal in our minds. Further, willpower is built through overcoming previous difficulties successfully.

The second characteristic of hope is waypower, defined by Snyder (1994) as a mental capacity we call on to find one or more effective ways to reach our goals. The perception that one can engage in planful thought is essential to the development of waypower. Goals and waypower are intimately linked since clearly established goals enhance waypower. Waypower is also increased by previous efforts to overcome obstacles to the achievement of one's goals.

Hope, then, is the sum of mental willpower and waypower individuals have for the attainment of goals. High-hope people are able to set goals for themselves, to channel their energies to work for their goals, and to find a variety of ways to solve problems when they arise. Hope is adaptive and functional. How we think about our environment and our relation to it, is a fundamental key to understanding hope. Herein also lies the means by which to induce and nurture hope in our students.

Over the past three years our research group has been working with elementary and secondary school children and their teachers to develop ways to introduce hope lessons into the curriculum. The ideas and methods we have developed were found to be helpful and easy to incorporate into classroom activities. Before presenting these methods of nurturing hope, some background may be helpful in understanding the context.

Several years ago, as a result of hearing an impassioned speech by the Reverend Jesse

Jackson in which he stated that underprivileged African American children were missing hope in their lives, the ideas presented in this article began to take shape. If hope is a missing ingredient for these children, and others living at or below the poverty level, then it is clearly not being conveyed and nurtured in the classroom. It is in the classroom where we, as educators, have an opportunity to intervene. Although it would be ideal for hope to be a lesson parents could teach, we know that many children come from low-hope homes, and that parents with low hope do not induce high hope in their children.

Knowing the time constrints already facing teachers to present required materials, the challenge of bringing hope into the classroom meant that these lessons would need to be incorporated into the regular curriculum. Stories of hope which could be used in reading, creative writing, or art projects appeared to be the best place to begin. With that in mind, we developed a reading project in which stories of high-hope children were read to classes in grades 1 through 6, processed for comprehension, and then discussed in terms of how the students themselves could see hope in their own lives.

The Childrens' Hope Scale (Snyder, et al., in press), and The Young Childrens' Hope Scale (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 1997)) were administered both before and after the reading program. Modest elevations in hope scores were registered after the reading program, which was conducted once a week for one half hour. We anticipated that this brief exposure might be too minimal to have a significant effect, however, because this was a trial project, this was the time we were allocated. Teachers post-test ratings of their students were in a more positive direction after the program was completed than they had been in the pre-test. There were frequent comments that the hope stories were providing an opportunity to observe and interact with students in classroom discussions that otherwise would not have occurred. It became apparent to teachers and researchers alike, that hope cannot simply be a lesson added to the curriculum and taught once in a while; it must be a fundamental approach to teaching incorporated into many aspects of the

curriculum. It was in large part because of the requests we had from teachers that we developed the approaches to teaching hope encompassed in this paper.

The purpose of this paper is to present a variety of workable methods for increasing hope in students. Some of these methods rely on stories, while others involve teaching young people to give themselves more hopeful messages and to make useful decisions. We also address the attitude of hope held by the teacher or counselor as an integral and necessary part of the process of communicating this attitude to students. Finally we address the concept and characteristics of a high-hope school. All of the methods proposed in this paper have been used sucessfully in classrooms by both teachers and guidance counselors. These methods, and others, are elaborated more fully in a forthcoming book entitled *Hope for the Journey: Leading Children Through Good Times and Bad* (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 1997).

Using Hope Stories

One way to instill hope in children is through using the type of stories mentioned above, which involve characters who exemplify high hope. The process of reading stories to children about a high-hope character with whom they can identify, not only provides a model of the hope process, but also helps them begin to create hope stories in their own lives. Hearing high-hope stories on a regular basis is likely to increase retention and foster greater integration of the concepts.

To use stories effectively with children, it is important that the story be age-appropriate in terms of language skills and comprehension (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 1997). Stories can be read as part of the regular classroom curriculum, or older children can read these stories on their own. In school settings, teachers may struggle with the impossible task of squeezing one more item into their overloaded schedulesn but incorporating hope stories into other lesson plans alleviates this time pressure. For instance, teachers can read a hope story involving a character who is an immigrant from another country as part of a geography lesson, stressing not only details

about the country of origin, but also how hope was a necessary ingredient of the character's determination and courage to immigrate.

In order to insure that the stories are used effectively with children, it is important to ask questions about the story (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 1997). For example, questions should first determine whether the children comprehended the basic ideas in the story. Questions should address who the main person was in the story, what was his or her goal, what did the main character need to accomplish to reach the goal, what problems were encountered in working for the goal, what were the ways the character thought of to overcome the problems, and what was the eventual outcome. These questions assess the students' basic understanding of the story to insure that any misunderstanding or confusion is cleared up before discussing how the character used the concept of hope.

The next set of questions should address how the character used hope in the story, both through thought and actions. The teacher should ask the students to describe things the character said or thought which fostered a feeling of being able to work toward the goal. For example, the character in the story may have given positive self messages such as "I know I can do this." *The Little Engine that Could* (Piper, 1984) is an excellent example with his self-talk of "I think I can, I think I can."

The next questions involve asking the children to describe ways the character found to accomplish the goal and work around problems. A story such as *The Swiss Family Robinson* (Wyss, 1813) provides an excellent example of coping and problem solving in the face of difficult circumstances. Questions are designed to be somewhat repetitive to give students an opportunity to practice new skills, therefore allowing for effective learning to take place.

After discussing the basic ideas of the story and how the character works for his or her goal, children can give examples of times they have used hope in their own lives in order to accomplish a goal. As children tell their stories it is important to remember that young children tend to blur the

line between what they have actually done and what they wish they had done (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 1997). Even wishful stories are helpful in producing hope, and it is important to respond positively to each story. At the same time, it is important not to accept as real an aspect of the story that is fantasy or wishful thinking. You may let the child know that the story is a good wish and might be possible sometime. If the story is plausible. but somewhat doubtful, it is best to treat it as fact. Always praise a child for his or her accomplishment or for the effort if the goal was not reached. If the child wants to give up, brainstorm with the other children for alternatives to solve the problem, or substitute a new or different goal. It is also a good idea to discuss each child's story individually with the child, especially if the stories consistently reflect low hope.

There are many activities that can be incorporated into reading stories of hope to help the learning process come alive. For instance, by asking a child to draw the beginning, middle and end of the story on a piece of paper, the process of comprehending the basic ideas of the story can be checked through the child's art work. Thus art and sequential comprehension are brought together in the lesson about hope. Puppets representing the characters in the story can also be made by the children as part of an art project and used during the reading of the story to make the learning process more exciting.

Teachers can make hope part of the classroom routine starting the first day of school with setting the goal of meeting and coping with the challenges children encounter on that beginning day (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 1997). This process can be enriched by asking children to draw pictures of how they felt coming to school that day, and encouraging students to share their hopes and fears as they discuss their drawings. For older children the drawing is a way to get started, but teachers may wish to move to writing or discussing the story. Next the children can draw or discuss their mutual goal, having a good first day at school. In addition, they can draw, discuss, or write about what situations might make it difficult to have a good first day, such as

learning new things, meeting new people, or getting acquainted with a new teacher. After examining the goal and the barriers that might be encountered, students can then brainstorm or draw the ways they can succeed in overcoming these barriers. The final step is to draw or discuss how each wants to feel at the end of the day.

A final activity involving stories is to have children create their own hope stories either through drawings or through writing. The student should be asked to follow the same general pattern used when examining the hope content of stories. The story begins with a description of the goal followed by an illustration of the student's feelings of empowerment to work for the goal. This is especially important because high-hope and low-hope students will describe these feelings differently and will provide the teacher, or counselor, an opening for discussion. The next part of the hope story should introduce any problems that were encountered in working for the goal, and most important, how these problems were circumvented. In high-hope stories the student can think of many ways to solve a problem, while in low-hope stories the student may be unable to identify solutions and may give up. The conclusion of the story tells whether the goal was achieved or, if not, the outcome is described. High-hope stories are not always success stories in the sense that the initial goal was achieved. Goals may be substituted or adapted, and the effort put forth in and of itself may be a valuable lesson for the future. Whatever the outcome, students should always be praised for their efforts.

Helping students to view their activities in terms of this model of hope can be started when children are quite young. With very young children, or with children who are low-hope, it is important to encourage them to keep their beginning goals small, or break larger ones down into small components. The expectation is that 1) children must come to understand the hope process and see their activities as goal setting and attainment, and 2), children must experience success and positive feedback. Each time a child sets a goal and puts forth some effort to attain it, regardless of outcome, he or she has put one more brick into building a solid foundation of high hope.

Teaching Hopeful Thinking

Helping students develop hope involves helping them to think in a hopeful manner. One way of facilitating hopeful thinking is having students practice identifying the high-hope and low-hope statements they say to themselves. Once they can identify such statements, they are then in a position to monitor the messages they give themselves. Further, once students know the difference between high-hope and low-hope talk, they can begin to substitute hopeful messages in their thoughts about themselves and their abilities.

Using self talk is an approach which is applicable in a variety of situations. With this technique, the student is taught to talk to him or herself in an effort to guide thoughts and actions. Initially the talk may be aloud, but once the skill is mastered, the talk becomes internal. Snyder (1994) notes that using positive self talk can be an effective tool for athletes in increasing willpower. It can also be applied in a classroom guidance lesson, small group counseling session, or adapted for use with students in individual counseling. The following activity is designed to teach students to identify the difference between high-hope talk and low-hope talk, and to incorporate hopeful themes into the messages they give themselves. Teachers might also use this activity as part of the language arts or social studies curriculum. After this activity a model for teaching decision making skills is introduced.

High-Hope Talk and Low-Hope Talk Game

The game begins with the counselor (or teacher) explaining to students that the statements we tell ourselves can have a powerful effect on what happens to us. An example may be helpful, such as "Telling myself that this is going to be a terrible day after something goes wrong means I probably will have a terrible day, because I will be looking for other things to go wrong."

Next, two large signs are placed on the wall. On one is written "High Hope Talk," and on the other "Low Hope Talk." Explain to the students that everyone has a choice about the messages they give themselves. While people cannot always control what happens to them, they can control

how they think about what happens and what they tell themselves. Offer the students a scenario such as "Tyrone received new rollerblades for his birthday yesterday, and he was looking forward to using them this afternoon with friends. Unfortunately, it has been raining all day, and it is unlikely Tyrone will be able to spend the afternoon outside." Explain to the students that Tyrone has a choice. He can either use low-hope talk or high-hope talk to think about his situation. Ask for two volunteers to come and stand beneath the signs on the walls and read prepared scripts that show the difference between the two types of self-talk. In the low-hope script have Tyrone focus on such negative thoughts as, "Its not fair, this always happens to me. I wanted to use my new rollerblades now I can't." In the high-hope script have Tyrone focus on positive thoughts such as, "I'm disappointed it's raining, but I know I can use my rollerblades tomorrow or the next day when it clears up. I can find something else to do with my friends inside today." Discuss with the class

the different feelings Tyrone is likely to have as a result of the different self-talk approaches he might use. Discuss how others will feel about being around Tyrone as he uses these different ways of talking to himself.

After several demonstrations of using high- and low-hope talk with scripts, have students make up their own messages about situations you give them. Older elementary, middle and high school students can make up scenarios and have classmates demonstrate how someone would apply high-hope and low-hope talk to these situations. In our experience, students like this activity because of the role playing involved. They also enjoy thinking up situations they have experienced, and appointing others to practice the kind of talk they could have used. To conclude the activity, ask students to implement high-hope talk sometime during the next week and report back or record in a journal about how it worked.

As with the hope stories, repetition enhances retention. Students should be given several opportunities to practice this activity. The teacher or counselor can encourage students to submit

ideas for scenarios, one of which will be selected for demonstration and discussion at the beginning of class each day. These ten minute refresher lessons help remind students they have choices in how they think about events. The activity also helps establish a classroom tone which communicates that hopeful thinking is considered a priority by the teacher and that maintaining an optimistic attitude in the face of difficulties can help one remain focused on goals in spite of disappointments that arise.

Teaching Decision Making Skills

Envisioning goals: The "Winner" Model

This model is designed to help students in setting goals and brainstorming pathways, both essential components of hope. The teacher or counselor introduces the six-step model noting that, when combined, the first letter of each step in the model spells the word "Winner." The steps are as follows: **W**hat is your goal? **I**dentify pathways to reach your goal. **N**ame obstacles you may encounter. **N**avigate ways around the obstacles. **E**lect a pathway to try. **R**ethink your strategy and evaluate your approach. The teacher should emphasize that being a winner does not mean we are always successful. but rather that we make an honest effort in setting and working toward our goals. Sometimes, we will start down a pathways toward a goal only to discover that we may need to set a different goal, one which is more realistic. The steps in the model can be displayed in a prominent place in the classroom for students to view. With practice, students will be able to apply the steps when setting goals and identifying strategies to reach them.

The teacher or counselor should demonstrate the model through presenting a stiuation to the class such as the following: Jolene wanted to give her mother a special gift for her birthday. The gift costs $10, and Jolene only has $6. What can she do? Using this example, the teacher can guide the students in brainstorming solutions for Jolene's problem. Jolene could ask a grandparent for a loan, she could do extra chores in order to make money, or she could rethink her goal and decide on a different, more affordable gift. Each pathway will have its own set of potential

obstacles which can be discussed. As with the high-hope thinking game, teachers can solicit goals from students and use their examples with the class to further illustrate how the model applies to real-life situations.

An extension of this activity involves having students map out goals through visual means. Students can draw a map that displays the various pathways one could take to reach a goal. Obstacles encountered could appear as mountains blocking the pathway or as bodies of water that need to be crossed. The ways in which students brainstorm coping with barriers they encounter can also be represented on the map. For example, hiking boots for climbing the mountains or rocks placed in water to ford a stream can represent the specific strategies students identify to overcome obstacles. In addition to displaying the goal-seeking process through drawing, three dimensional means can also be employed through the use of clay, plasticine, or other materials. Obviously, this extension of the goal setting and decision making model requires the ability to think metaphorically, but for older students or particularly creative children, this can be a challenging and enjoyable approach to working with the goal setting model.

According to Snyder (1994), goal formation and subsequent decision making are vital skills for young people to learn if they are to lead productive lives. We already teach decision making skills in contexts such as substance use and sexuality These skills should not be limited to problematic situations, but expanded to everyday situations for use with multiple developmental changes. The Winner Model, for example, can be used with any decision for all ages. It is advisable to take students through the model frequently when there are choices to be made. With repitition, the student can learn to go through this process routinely on his or her own. Teachers and counselors should place special emphasis on the "Rethink your strategy and evaluate your approach" step. In this way young people can learn not just to decide, but to feel confident they are making good decisions. This is a difficult skill to teach older people once they become entrenched in maladaptive ways of making decisions. For that reason, and because it is such an important skill

for effective living, it sould be routinely taught in our schools.

Teachers and Counselors Need Hope Too

Previously we discussed activities to increase hope in children, however this is a futile task if the teachers and counselors themselves are also low in hope. The question then becomes, can we give our students that which we do not have? We know that discouragement tends to breed discouragement and that, most importantly, hope is infectious (Snyder, 1994). In *Hope for the Journey: Leading our Children Through Good Times and Bad*, Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff (1997) have written about high- and low-hope teachers and the factors that have contributed to their level of hope. For many teachers and counselors, we have found, the process of diminishing hope was a gradual one of experiencing a succession of disappointments. Most teachers or counselors do not expect their salaries to be high, but neither do they expect them to be unrewarding and unteflective of the hard work and long hours required to teach effectively. Teachers expect, and have a right to expect, that their schools will be adequately funded so that they do not have to personally purchase supplies from their already small salaries. Many teachers and counselors who express a low-hope attitude simply feel unappreciated and unrewarded for the work they do. They frequently feel that neither students nor their parents value the education and suppoort they are trying to provide, and thus, have lost enthusiasm for the teaching or counseling process.

This process of losing hope is called professional burnout. Burnout is a common problem among people whose work is demanding and stressful, as it is for teachers and counselors. One of the insidious characteristics of professional burnout is that it seems so justified to the individual experiencing it, and because the situations are real, it seems impossible to cure. But it is not impossible to change one's attitude. Most researchers in the area of burnout espouse learning to say "no" and learning to take care of one's self as primary remedies. Many articles and books have been written about burnout and they provide valuable information that need not be repeted here.

These resources are readily available in the self-help sections of most bookstores.

Another and more pervasive reason some teachers may have low-hope is that they were raised in families and environments where low-hope was the norm and considered reality. Many people operate on the low-hope end of the continuum, believing that higher hope is simply Pollyannaism. This is a much more difficult mental attitude to change than burnout, since the individual has not been taught alternative ways to approach life. In *Hope for the Journey: Leading our Children Through Good Times and Bad* (Snyder, McDermott, Cook and Rappoff, 1997), there are descriptions and stories of individuals who fit this pattern, and suggestions for changing these attitudes.

Examining your own hope

A first step in developing higher hope is to determine whether your hope is lower than you would like, and subsequently how your low hope may have developed First, we recommend taking the Hope Scale (Snyder, et al. 1991) provided in Figure 1. Score it so that you can determine whether you are low or high in willpower, waypower, or both. Items 1, 3, 5, and 7 describe willpower and items 2, 4, 6 and 8 describe waypower. If you are not satisfyed with your scores and want to raise them, you might first give some thought about where your low hope originates. If you determine that it is from burnout, you can find help from one of the many books published on the subject. If on the other hand, you believe your low hope originates in a life-long attitude, you may wish to change some of the messages you have learned so that your thinking and outlook become more positive.

Insert Figure 1. about here

The techniques we have proposed in this paper to raise hope scores can be used by you as well as your students to develop a more positive approach to life. In terms of using the story approach,

it is helpful to write your own narrative about events that happened to you when you were young. Examine these stories to determine what types of messages you got from parents and significant others about the goals you set and the problems with which you had to contend. You may find that negative messages were passed on from other family members from generation to generation. As an example of this process consider the narrative written by one teacher, Mr. Smith, who expressed a need to increase his hope. He was the son of a former dust-bowl share cropper whose family had been through many hard times. Despite the fact that this family experienced easier times and financial successes as this young man was growing up, there was always a sense that bad times were just around the corner. Whenever any event happened that was negative it would be labeled "the Smith curse." Much as with Tyrone and the rainy day, this family always expected the worst. Mr. Smith approached life from that viewpoint and never examined alternative ways. Unfortunately, when his students needed his support and enthusiasm for their ideas and plans, he was often negative and discouraging, unable to foster hope because his own was so low.

Next, carefully examine the messages you tell yourself about your prospects for acheiving your current goals to discover the types of messages tou give yourself. Determine whether there are ways to make those messages more positive by using some of the methods we have suggested for use in the classroom. The subject of increasing your personal hope has been covered extensively in *Hope for the Journey: Leading Children Through Good Times and Bad* (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 1997). Two additional helpful resources are *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* (Burns, 1980) and *The Feeling Good Handbook* (Burns, 1990). It is not easy to change life-long habits of thought but it is well worth the effort. Believe that it is possible to become a more hopeful person, and this is crucial to the ability to infect our youth with hope.

A Final Note: The High-hope School

The schools in which we have conducted the Hope Project have a special character about

them. We might call them "high-hope schools" because the teachers, counseling staff, administrators, and even the support personnel seem to radiate genuine caring for students and a positive attitude. When one enters the building there is usually a smiling face and a willingness to answer questions or be of help. Teachers and other staff are treated professionally and decisions are usually made democratically. In a high-hope school, teachers and staff are supportive of one another and do not denigrate either each other or the students.

In these schools there is an expectation that all staff care about students. A conscious effort is made to help students treat each other with respect and caring as well. Bullying is not permitted, nor is teasing, because these behaviors diminish other children's hope. Rules are based on kindness, helping and caring, and the school provides an atmosphere where children can be heard. High-hope schools are trusting places and students frequently take part in the problem solving process. Peer mediation is one such vehicle for student participation, but students may also brainstorm solutions through class meetings where their ideas are encouraged.

In high-hope schools students are affirmed for their varied strengths. With the emphasis on diversity in today's society this is an especially important factor. In a high-hope school no student would be made to feel less than valuable for what ever unique characteristics he or she possesses. The high-hope school develops a consistent system of discipline and children know what is expected of them. At the same time, they are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and are praised for the small steps they take along the road to achievement.

All of this is a tall order for any school, and especially difficult for schools located in poorer areas or neighborhoods where social turmoil exists. But just as we encourage our children to take small steps and find reward in little achievements, we must gradually progress toward the promise of a high-hope school. Our youth are worth every effort!

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Figure 1

Hope Scale*

Directions: Read each item carefully. Using the scale below, please select the number that best describes you and put that number on the blank provided.

1=definately false 2=mostly false 3=mostly true 4=definately true

_____ 1. I energetically pursue my goals.

_____ 2. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.

_____ 3. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.

_____ 4. There are lots of ways around any problem.

_____ 5. I've been pretty sucessful in life.

_____ 6. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.

_____ 7. I meet the goals that I set for myself.

_____ 8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.

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